

Draft Submission on the NSW Disability Inclusion Plan

November 2014

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Opening:

Local Government NSW (LGNSW) is the peak body for NSW Local Government, representing all the 152 NSW general-purpose councils, the special-purpose county councils and the NSW Aboriginal Land Council. The mission of Local Government NSW is to be a credible, professional organisation representing Local Government and facilitating the development of an effective community-based system of Local Government in NSW.

Purpose:

LGNSW welcomes the opportunity to respond to the NSW *Disability Inclusion Plan Discussion paper and Draft Outline 2014* and will address its comments to the questions contained in the on line response form and sections of the Discussion Paper which are relevant to Local Government in NSW. This submission remains a Draft until endorsement by the LGNSW Board.

Background

For Local Government 'social justice' is based on the application of the following four principles:

Equity - fairness in the distribution of resources, particularly for those in need

Rights - equality of rights established and promoted for all people

Access - fair access for all people to economic resources, services and rights essential to their quality of life

Participation - opportunity for all people to genuinely participate in the community and be consulted on decisions which affect their lives.

These principles underpin the planning and services of Local Government in NSW. Our response to the NSW *Disability Inclusion Plan 2014* reflects these principles. Local Government in NSW supports the move to a person centred disability system, one that meets the individual needs and goals of people with disability and supports them to realise their potential. LGNSW is pleased to participate in the Ability Links Advisory group and the Ministerial Reference Group on Person Centred Approaches and to support a strengthened model of local area coordination across NSW.

Q1. Is it clear how the NSW Disability Inclusion Plan fits with the other policies supporting the rights of people with disability?

Councils in NSW plan to meet the needs of the community through their 10 year Community Strategic Plans, which are based on community engagement and reflect the communities' priorities. In addition to planning, many councils in NSW currently provide direct support for people with a disability in the local community, either through facilitating access to Community Care Support Program (previously HACC) Services, running activities and facilities or enabling links to local services. Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) funded Ageing and Disability workers are located in approximately 70 councils in NSW and it is likely they will be called

upon to provide additional support for people with disability as they become more included into the community and access mainstream services.

Councils in NSW will need to consider the alignment of their Disability Inclusion Action Plans with their broader Community Strategic Plans.

The following part of our submission will address the sections of the discussion paper.

Section 3 Leading the Way

Q2. What other actions could government take to influence the adoption of inclusive practices across the general community?

Are there case studies or other examples available to illustrate how this may occur?

Section 3 of the *NSW Disability Inclusion Plan – Leading the Way* identifies a Potential Action of “Work with Local Government to support the development of effective inclusive community planning and development”.

LGNSW supports this action but seeks clarification on how the NSW Government intends to work with Local Government to achieve inclusion. Effective implementation at the local level will rely heavily on leadership from within each council. In around 70 councils in NSW, the Ageing and Disability officer plays an important role in raising awareness across all the departments of council and will be responsible for identifying actions for which they are accountable within a Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP).

The future funding of these positions is uncertain, despite the fact that they have been a key, strategic role involved in the development of disability-related policies, coordinating the Council’s Disability Advisory Committees, facilitating community engagement and advocating for the needs of the local population of people with disability, families, carers and disability services, and organising International Day of People with Disability and Disability Expos.

Without such a champion, many smaller councils may struggle to allocate sufficient resources to achieve inclusive planning and development within their LGAs. **LGNSW recommends the continuation of funding for these positions and its extension to all councils in NSW.**

Similarly, another Potential Action identified in Section 3 is “Commit all NSW Government departments and Local Government to include development of DIAPs as part of their strategic business planning processes and to allocate the responsibility for this at executive level”.

Councils in NSW plan to meet the needs of the community through their 10 year Community Strategic Plan/4 year Delivery Program/1 year Operational Plan hierarchy, which are based on community engagement and reflect the communities’ priorities. In the context of these broad and inclusive plans, individual groups within the population are not necessarily targeted separately. A well-developed Community Strategic Plan will address the needs of the whole community and therefore create a community which is inclusive, accessible and liveable. Each

council will plan to meet these needs in light of their financial sustainability and budgetary constraints. Responsibility for these plans rest with the elected members of council.

LGNSW appreciates that the *Disability Inclusion Act 2014* allows councils to integrate Disability Inclusion Action Plans into existing council planning processes. **Further, LGNSW recommends that local plans continue to have priority and be recognised as meeting the requirements of the *Disability Inclusion Act 2014* in terms of DIAPs as long as consultation and engagement processes include people with disability.**

Section 4 Focus for action

Q3. What other actions should be included under each of the areas of focus for the NSW Disability Inclusion Plan?

Do you have examples of personal experience or stories to illustrate how addressing these areas effects individuals' lives?

Our submission will now address the four areas of focus for the NSW Disability Inclusion Plan (DIP).

A. Liveable communities

LGNSW welcomes the Creating Liveable Communities competition for councils and thanks FACS for the funding to support this opportunity. Annual Liveable Communities awards through the Local Government awards would ensure that successful Local Government approaches to Liveable Communities are recognised and shared.

LGNSW suggests that providing funding and resourcing for council Access Committees to employ professionals such as Occupational Therapists or Access Auditors to assess local community needs, would contribute to councils' plans for improvements in the local physical environment and identify areas where funding for necessary community modifications may be required.

The Potential Action to 'provide funding to support the development of sustainable projects and focused pilots supporting 'Liveable Communities NSW' is endorsed and **LGNSW recommends that funding be distributed to organisations based on advice from the relevant council, as Local Government has a comprehensive knowledge of the services and needs of an area.**

LGNSW suggests there are opportunities to further strengthen the connections between State and Local Government to better identify issues and share existing resources to promote ways of working together. The Integrated Planning and Reporting process provides a forum in which State government agencies can participate in developing local plans which result in liveable communities. Commitment from state government agencies such as those responsible for health, housing, transport and education, to actions in these plans that contribute to inclusive local communities is crucial to the successful implementation of these plans.

An example of the need for improved commitment from state government agencies comes from a New England council where people with a disability have requested a second traffic light controlled pedestrian crossing to enable persons using motorised wheelchairs or gophers to cross, rather than have to travel (including crossing numerous side streets) to the pedestrian crossing at the other end of the street.

LGNSW recommends that State government agencies make a binding commitment to fulfilling the actions for inclusion that are identified in Local Government's Community Strategic plans and that these actions inform the development of state-wide plans for inclusion.

LGNSW supports the development of a FACS-wide local planning engagement framework to support the roll-out of FACS local services planning. **LGNSW submits that the success of the roll-out would be enhanced by stronger liaison with LGNSW, to ensure engagement with our members.**

The Potential Action in the Disability Inclusion Plan Discussion Paper that "FACS will facilitate local district planning groups involving participation from all relevant departments and Local Government, to identify local strategies and coordinate projects" is supported by LGNSW. **Without dedicated staff in councils to drive this process, LGNSW recommends the NSW Government resource local district planning groups with dedicated staff to ensure joint government and council programs and activities are followed through and actioned.**

B. Employment

LGNSW supports the employment of people with disability in Local Government **and suggests that strategies developed for State government agencies to support recruitment and retention of people with disability also be made available to Local Government.**

Aligned with employment of people with disability is the capacity to purchase services and equipment from Australian Disability Enterprises where suitable. Currently councils are not able to participate in State government policy objectives of supporting registered Australian Disability Enterprises by being able to procure directly from such organisations without having to go to tender. Recommendation 3.3.10 of the Local Government Acts Taskforce, *Report to the Minister for Local Government, A New Local Government Act for New South Wales and Review of the City of Sydney Act 1988*, 16 October 2013 states that:

councils continue to be able to take advantage of purchasing from Commonwealth and State Government procurement panels and the State Government policies which afford exemption from tendering obligations such as when purchasing from registered Australian Disability Enterprises. LGNSW supports this recommendation.

C. Attitudes and behaviour

LGNSW supports the Potential Action of "supporting the development of a human rights learning and development resource in conjunction with FACS Law and Justice and the Australian Human Rights Commission" and **recommends that the NSW Local Government Human Resources network be engaged in the development of the resource to ensure its applicability to Local Government in NSW. LGNSW also suggests that all councils in NSW are provided access to a training module on disability related human rights and inclusion, to support their inclusion planning.**

D. Systems and processes

LGNSW supports the Potential Actions identified in this section of the Discussion paper and **recommends that Local Government be included in the identification of mechanisms for supporting quality service delivery and disability inclusion across government.**

While councils in NSW are supportive of the principle of providing information to their communities in accessible formats, there is concern about the cost to councils of redeveloping their websites to meet compliance standards. The provision of key policy documents in accessible formats is a goal that councils are working towards, however **LGNSW recommends that resources such as website audits, website design templates and checklists be available to councils. In addition, funds dedicated to developing accessible websites are recommended.**

Other systems can facilitate access, such as the provision of 'full fare' taxi vouchers to persons with a disability in towns and centres where there is no public transport infrastructure such as light rail or buses. This is particularly so in remote and rural areas where there is no cheap and easily accessible public transport available to persons with a disability.

Persons with a disability also need access to specialised help (e.g. signing for the deaf, tactile and Braille signage for the blind, ramps for wheelchair dependent persons, paved footpaths, etc.) at all public facilities and access transport corridors, and funding for these initiatives should be available to Local Government.

Priority populations

Q4. What actions should be considered for inclusion in the NSW Disability Inclusion Plan to support the inclusion of the particular groups identified?

Can you describe examples of personal experience or stories which illustrate how the barriers facing these groups can be broken down?

Children with disability

As a significant provider of childcare services in NSW, Local Government in NSW needs to be actively engaged in any strategies that build frontline capacity and knowledge of issues specific to inclusion of children with disability. **LGNSW submits that the proposed annual forum focusing on children with disability should ensure that the early childhood, pre-school and childcare service providers, such as Local Government are included.**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people with disability

LGNSW supports the engagement of Aboriginal people in the development of culturally appropriate inclusion of people with disability and **recommends consulting with the NSW Aboriginal Land Council on relevant approaches.**

People with disability from diverse cultural backgrounds

LGNSW recognises the importance of developing local approaches to the inclusion of people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The Potential Action of ‘developing leadership and expertise within the community that can act as resources, points of referral or as a community voice’ is endorsed. Councils play an important role as reference points for their communities. In addition, councils are responsible for running or approving cultural events and can ensure they are fully accessible to people from diverse backgrounds. **LGNSW suggests that councils be resourced to provide additional support to people with disability in the community from diverse cultural backgrounds.**

The Ageing and Disability positions in council are an essential resource to ensuring the successful development of culturally inclusive policies.

Women with disability

LGNSW encourages the involvement of Local Government in the development of strategies which address the disadvantage experienced by women with disability.

Disability Inclusion Action Planning

Q5. Are there other general supports that the NSW Government should consider to ensure the NSW Disability Inclusion Plan achieves its goals?

Many of our members, especially those without dedicated Ageing and Disability staff, are concerned that the development of Disability Inclusion Action Plans will require significant resources. **LGNSW recommends the provision of funding to assist councils to develop their initial Disability Inclusion Action Plans by 2017.**

Templates or other resources would simplify the process for those councils without staff dedicated to the development of the plans. **LGNSW supports the development of guidelines specific to Local Government in order to assist councils to develop effective Disability Inclusion Action Plans.**

Councils may incorporate Disability Actions into councils’ broader plans, rather than develop stand-alone DIAPs. The NSW Office of Local Government has expertise in reviewing councils’ Community Strategic Plans and can advise on the Integrated Planning and Reporting process. **LGNSW suggests that the Disability Council NSW is supported by the Office of Local Government in reviewing plans developed by councils.**

Local Government engagement

LGNSW strongly supports the Potential Action to “engage with Local Government on the development of additional material to support their DIAP planning processes and align them with the community planning process by 2017” and will, within current resource limitations, assist with this engagement.

Strengthening the voice of people with disability in the community

LGNSW supports the Potential Action to develop “practical applications such as disability awareness training and resources to strengthen access committees”. While many councils have formal Access Committees, **LGNSW submits it is important to recognise that councils may engage people with disability through other mechanisms such as through engagement strategies to inform the development of their Community Strategic Plans or advisory groups.**

LGNSW thanks NSW Family and Community Services for the opportunity to respond to the NSW *Disability Inclusion Plan Discussion paper and Draft Outline 2014* and looks forward to an ongoing partnership continuing to build Liveable Communities in NSW.